

WINTER  
2001

# Lake Times

J. Strom Thurmond Project, Savannah District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



## Winter off-season maintenance underway

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is busy at this time of year making facility improvements in recreation areas.

With camping and day use slowed by the cooler weather, the Thurmond Lake staff has begun work at two locations: Contractors are installing a water-borne restroom at the boat ramp in Lake Springs Recreation

Area. The new restroom will replace the existing rustic toilets, scheduled for removal. A new "tie-down" lane has been added to accommodate more boaters as they launch or leave the ramp area.

On the South Carolina side of the lake, work has begun to renovate Modoc Campground.

Modernization of this 49-site campground will be a two-year process. This winter crews will construct new sites and improve existing sites in two loops of the campground. The new sites should be ready for campers by the April 1, 2001, opening date, bringing the campground's total to 62 sites. Getting in and out of the campground will also be easier with an improved entrance station, complete with additional parking and inside counter service. Next summer camping customers will be able to come in out of the heat while registering, asking about future camping dates, or getting other information.

For more information, call Chief Ranger Jeff Rose, 1-800-533-3478, ext. 1116. To make camping reservations up to 240 days in advance, call the National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS), 1-888-444-6777 or on-line at [www.reserveusa.com](http://www.reserveusa.com)



Lake Springs gate attendant offers customer a comment card.

## Thurmond customer survey complete

Does the Corps care what our customers think?

Yes! And to prove it, the Thurmond Lake Recreation staff asked lake visitors what they thought about the parks they used this summer. An annual "Customer Care" survey was conducted between June 14 and Aug. 5, 2000, at 10 campgrounds and five day-use areas. On randomly selected week and weekend dates, customers entering the parks were

given a comment card and asked to rate facilities and services in nine categories. Visitors were also encouraged to provide their written comments on what improvements they would like to see at the parks they visited.

Park attendants distributed 3,796 comment cards during the eight-week survey. A total of 2,224 completed cards were returned by visitors as they left the parks. The

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### Park Opening Dates

#### Spring 2001

March 1. Broad River, Mt. Carmel, Raysville, and Winfield campgrounds open

March 30. Big Hart, Ridge Road, Modoc, Hawe Creek, and Hester's Ferry open

April 1. All day-use areas will open by this date

Petersburg, Clay Hill, and Leroy's Ferry are open all year

### ***Visitor Center undergoing facelift***

Plans are proceeding according to schedule to update the exhibits in the Thurmond Lake Visitor Center. If you've been by recently, you know that the Visitor Center entrance has been relocated so that crews can perform maintenance work. Visitors will continue to have access to information, services and the offices during the work. After Jan. 1, the visitor center main entrance will reopen and the new exhibits installed later in the year.

### **Christmas Trees to be recycled**

Look for the familiar tree recycling signs at participating marinas and boat ramps and drop your tree off after the holidays. Volunteers are welcome to use the trees for habitat structures. For locations or more information, call 1-800-533-3478, ext. 1116.

#### **Day-use passes available**

Annual day use passes for 2001 are now available at the lake office. Call 1-800-533-3478, ext. 1147, for more information.

## **Customer survey**

*Continued from front page*

resulting 59 percent return rate is considered a very good response and provides a reliable sampling of customers. All the information from the cards has been compiled into a Customer Care Survey Report. This report is currently being reviewed by Thurmond Lake management to determine areas where we might improve our facilities or services.

Comments from past surveys revealed that visitors wanted more security patrols and improved facilities. Ridge Road Campground renovation was completed during the 1999-2000 winter off-season and work is underway to renovate Modoc Campground. Some of the dense underbrush was cleared between beaches and parking lots to increase visibility. Ranger patrols were increased at Amity Recreation Area and in most campgrounds.

Overall, the survey results show customers are very satisfied with the facilities and services provided at Thurmond Lake. For more information, call Ranger J. C. Bridges at 1-800-533-3478, ext. 1126.

## **Corps Promotes Water Safety *Thurmond to participate in Palmetto Sportsman's Classic***

Rangers from Thurmond Lake will host a table at the 17th Annual Palmetto Sportsman's Classic in March 2001. Our rangers will promote water safety and provide information about recreational opportunities such as camping, fishing, and hunting at Thurmond, Hartwell and Russell lakes. Many people are unaware of the Corps' role in providing recreation, so this is another opportunity for us to educate the public. Rangers will have information about the lakes, the southeastern United States, the National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS), and water safety.

Come by and visit us at the Thurmond Lake display at the 2001 Palmetto Sportsmen's Classic, March 23-25 at the state fairgrounds in Columbia, S.C.

This is the second year that the Corps will participate in this event, joining other agencies like the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, the National Wild Turkey Federation, and Clemson University Extension Service, which are active in the field of natural resources.

For more information, call the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources at 1-803-734-4008 or visit their website:

[www.dnr.state.sc.us/etc/classic/classic.html](http://www.dnr.state.sc.us/etc/classic/classic.html)

### ***Winter water safety tips***

Unexpected falls overboard is a major cause of accidental drowning, so be prepared if you should take a tumble. Lake levels are low due to long-term drought conditions, and underwater hazards may be out there. These are important things to remember to do:

- Wear your life jacket at all times on and around the water
- Dress for the weather
- Stay off the water in windy or threatening conditions
- Get off the water at the first sign of a thunderstorm
- Use your kill-switch and tether strap
- Give someone your float plan and your expected return time

## Threatened by fatal disease

# Eagle and Coot monitoring underway at Thurmond

Avian Vacuolar Myelinopath (AVM) continues to be a concern in the Southeast.

AVM is a disease that affects primarily bald eagles and coots (a migratory duck), but it has also been found in other waterfowl. The disease is of particular concern due to the seven eagle nests located around Thurmond Lake and the large number of coots that winter here. The disease is fatal in eagles.

For the third year, the Thurmond Lake staff will assist the University of Georgia in collecting coots and other waterfowl as part of their ongoing research to determine the cause of the disease. If you find a dead eagle, goose, or duck with no obvious injuries, please contact the Thurmond Lake Office or the Georgia or South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.

As a reminder, eagles nest and raise their young during the winter and spring. Of the seven known eagle nests on the lake, several are located very close to the shoreline. Too much disturbance by humans may cause the eagles to abandon their nests. If you happen to see an eagle's nest, it's best to simply leave



the area. If you wish to observe the eagles, do so from a distance of several hundred yards using binoculars. For additional information, contact Chief Ranger Allen Dean, 1-800-533-3478, ext. 1111.

## *Work on quail habitat demonstration area continues*

For more than a year, the Thurmond Project, Quail Unlimited, Inc. and other partners have been working to establish a Quail Habitat Demonstration Area adjoining the Below Dam Georgia boat ramp area. The purpose of this project is two-fold. First, it



will improve the habitat for the small number of quails living in this area. Second, the area will serve as an example for other landowners to follow if they

choose to improve the quail habitat on their property.

The thick pine forest in the area was thinned last summer to establish an open canopy and understory. This will permit the establishment of grasses and shrubs more suited to quail. The understory is being kept as open as possible through the use of prescribed fires and herbicide applications to control less desirable plant species such as sweetgum and elm trees.

Selected openings and sections of power line right-of-way have been planted in annual and permanent crops to provide the quail with preferred food sources.

Quail populations have been steadily declining throughout much of the Southeast due to loss of habitat. In order for quail populations to increase, quail hunting will not be permitted in this special demonstration area. Deer, turkey, dove, and small game hunting will continue to be allowed in accordance with state regulations.

The following partners are also providing support to the Quail Habitat Demonstration area: Georgia Forestry Commission, Georgia Power, Timberland Forestry and Industrial Herbicides, and Southeast Woodland Services.

For additional information contact Ranger David Williamson, 1-800-533-3478, ext. 1188.



**Corps of Engineers Volunteer Hotline**  
**1-800-865-8337**  
**Give a helping hand**

## Lake Level Projections

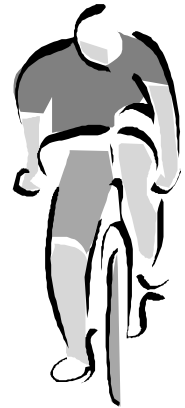
Falling lake levels have been a concern of many lake users, downstream businesses, and communities relying on Thurmond Lake and the Savannah River for water supplies. The lake level projections developed by Savannah District's hydrologic engineers are based on many factors, but primarily, on expected rainfall. At press time, the projections for Thurmond Lake were completed through Dec. 23, with a possible elevation of 320.2 feet msl (mean sea level). Levels are expected to rise as winter rains fall. The 34-month drought cycle has affected lake levels throughout the Southeast.

## Daily Pool Elevations

Current lake levels and power plant generation schedules are updated daily at the Thurmond Power Plant. For the latest information, call 1-800-533-3478, then press 4.

## Recreation

You can find updated information on daily pool elevations and power plant releases; hunting, hiking, cycling, and horseback information; and recreation area openings and closings at [www.sas.usace.army.mil/lakes/thurmond/](http://www.sas.usace.army.mil/lakes/thurmond/)



## Drought Information



Drought information about Corps lakes in the Southeast is available on Savannah District's homepage: [www.sas.usace.army.mil](http://www.sas.usace.army.mil) (then click on "Drought Information"). Thurmond Lake's latest lake level projections and ramp conditions are listed.



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